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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Identical letters dated 15 November 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The Palestinian terrorist campaign continues to claim the lives of innocent civilians in criminal acts of unspeakable cruelty and hatred.

Just a few hours ago, Palestinian gunmen hurled grenades and fired automatic weapons indiscriminately at a crowd of Jewish worshippers on their way to mark the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath at the Tomb of the Patriarchs (Ma'arat Hamachpelah) in Hebron, a site holy to both Muslims and Jews. At the time of writing, this brutal terrorist attack has claimed the lives of at least 12 people, and injured approximately 20, some critically. The gunmen executed their ambush from the Abu-Sneinah neighbourhood, an area under Palestinian Authority control, and have continued firing to prevent rescue personnel from reaching the scene. The Palestinian terrorist organization Islamic Jihad, headquartered in Damascus, which is funded and supported by a number of States, including Iran, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

This gruesome attack comes just five days after a gunman from Chairman Arafat's own Fatah movement murdered five people at Kibbutz Metzer in northern Israel, including a mother and her two young sons in their beds.

These terrorist atrocities, involving the deliberate and calculated massacre of innocent children and worshippers, must shock the conscience of any decent human being. The international community, which has recently strongly condemned despicable acts of terror in other parts of the world, must be clear in its outright and unequivocal rejection of the ongoing brutal Palestinian terrorist campaign, including these most recent terrorist attacks.

What message is sent to Israeli and Palestinian civilians, and to people throughout the world by the steadfast refusal of the Palestinian Authority to take any action whatsoever to prevent terrorism, and its own encouragement and involvement

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in such acts, despite explicit legal obligations and repeated calls of the Security Council, including in resolutions 1435 (2002) and 1373 (2001)? What message is sent by the relentless incitement to hatred and violence, and the glorification and celebration of such repugnant actions by the Palestinian leadership in its media and its religious and educational institutions? What choice does Israel have in the face of these criminal and intolerable acts of carnage, and in the absence of any measures of Palestinian compliance with their legal and moral obligations, but to take the necessary measures in defence of its citizens?

The only hope for peace and security in our region will come with a Palestinian leadership that is genuinely committed to complying with its obligations, and ready to prevent all acts of terrorism and incitement in accordance with its duties under international law and Security Council resolutions. Israel calls on the international community to demand nothing less of the Palestinian leadership and its security forces.

When people at prayer and women and children in their homes are viewed as the legitimate targets of attack, in the name of so-called "resistance", then the Palestinian cause has reached a point of moral bankruptcy, which can destroy any hopes of peace, for Israelis and Palestinians alike. This bankruptcy remains the greatest obstacle to a return to a path of peaceful negotiations, which is the only way to ensure secure, peaceful and dignified coexistence for both peoples in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

I submit the present letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36 and 160. An identical letter has been sent to the President of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative